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Romance, Wall Paintings and Vault Bosses : *Le Bone Florence of Rome* in Context*

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ロマンス・壁画・教会彫刻－『ローマの善女フローレンス』をめぐって

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中英語ロマンス『ローマの善女フローレンス』は当時人気の「受難の王妃」の物語である。ローマ皇后であるヒロインは男たちの奸計により濡れ衣を着せられ流浪する。後に癒しの業を身につけた彼女は、悪人たちの罪を告白させた上で業病に苦しむ彼らを治療してやる。本作品の類話は欧州各地に見られるが、『ゲスタ・ロマノールム』所収のものが『フローレンス』に近く、一方ミラクル・タイプと称される聖母奇蹟譚はやや趣を異にしているというのが定説である。この物語は、中世末期のイートン・カレッジ礼拝堂の壁画とノリッジ大聖堂内のボーチャン礼拝堂のアーチ型天井浮出し飾りでも扱われている。両礼拝堂はともに聖母に捧げられたものである。本論文では、『フローレンス』と、『ゲスタ』タイプとミラクル・タイプ、さらにイートン壁画およびノリッジ浮出し飾りの物語展開を比較検討することによって『フローレンス』の位置づけを明らかにし、中世後期のイングランド人の心象風景を聖母崇敬の観点から探る。

'Sometimes salvation is quicker if we remember Mary's name than if we invoke the name of the Lord Jesus. Why should this be so? I can only say what I feel.' — Eadmer, an English Benedictine (d. 1124) (1)

1.

Le Bone Florence of Rome, a Middle English tail-rhyme romance adapted from a longer French version, is generally claimed to be one of the Eustace-Constance-Florence-Griselda legends, a group of stories popular in late medieval England starring heroes and, in many cases, heroines tried by fate. (2) The pietistic and hagiographic romance whose heroine is a falsely accused Empress of Rome is a fine example of the

group. A variety of analogous stories of the calumniated Empress were scattered throughout medieval Europe, and have been classified under a handful of subgroups : 'oriental', 'Gesta Romanorum', 'Florence de Rome', 'Miracles of the Virgin', 'Crescentia', and 'Hildegarde'. Critics have variously argued about the origin of the analogues, and a more prevailing theory seems to be that the story originated in the Orient. Basically, however, the present paper does not concern itself with the origin or the process of diffusion of the analogues. Suffice it to say for the present purpose that amongst the European versions the 'Gesta Romanorum' and 'Florence' types, as against 'Miracles', 'Crescentia' and 'Hildegarde', are generally believed to be akin to each other. (3)

It seems to be little known that the story of the calumniated Empress of Rome is also depicted in the wall paintings decorating the Chapel at Eton College, Berkshire, and in the carved vault bosses at the Bauchun Chapel within Norwich Cathedral, Norfolk, both from the late fifteenth century. Both the wall paintings and the bosses are likely to be related to the miracles of the Virgin. This paper aims to compare *Le Bone Florence of Rome* with its analogous stories represented by the *Gesta Romanorum* and the miracles, and also with the Eton College wall paintings and the Bauchun Chapel bosses in an attempt to examine the characteristics of our romance in its relation to the other tales. Also it will, one hopes, shed some light on the mindset of the late medieval English as represented in the romance and the contemporary religious visual arts.

2.

Florence is contained in a unique manuscript, Cambridge University Library MS Ff. 2.38, composed in the late fifteenth, or possibly early sixteenth, century. Dialectologists have localised its language in Leicestershire (McIntosh, *et al.* Vol. I, 67). The poem in its original form, which does not exist now, was, it is claimed, written around 1400 in the North Midlands or Yorkshire. Although the immediate source of the English romance is not known, it was perhaps not very distant from an extant French version, *Florence de Rome*, found in a fourteenth-century manuscript, Nouv. acq. franc., 4192, Bibliothèque Nationale (Lee, 'A Middle English Adaptation' 344). The influence of the French upon the English has been extensively discussed by Lee in her edition of the English version and subsequent paper, to which we shall return wherever necessary. The opening part of *Florence*, whether in the English or in the French, resembles that of *The King of Tars*, another Middle English romance in tail-rhyme stanza, where a Christian princess is wooed by a heathen sultan. It is likely that the author of *Tars* was familiar with a French version of *Florence* (Hibbard 15 ; Perryman 50-51). But the later development of *Florence*, which centres around two basic motifs, i.e., the calumniation of the Empress by her brother-in-law (and others), and the healing of the disease-stricken evildoers

by the heroine, is quite unlike the latter half of *Tars*.

Not a few critics have noted a 'dual' structure of our romance: what is described extensively in the first half is a war between the Roman Emperor, the heroine's father, and Garcy, the aged and feeble Emperor of Constantinople who has asked for Florence's hand, but to no avail. Only later in the romance does the story bear a tone of hagiography. The rather diffuse introduction was originated by the French author (Lee, 'A Critical Edition' 154). Dieter Mehl says, 'In reading the poem we get the impression that [the romancer] set out to compose a rather burlesque and humorous adventure-story and that it was only in the course of his work that he realized the homiletic possibilities inherent in his material' (140). By pointing out a 'brief summary' of the first part (ll. 1330ff.) narrated by Sir Egravayne, Mehl not only thinks that the poem falls into two parts, but also suggests that it could have been read in two instalments (142). In her comment on the combination of the earlier worldly and later religious elements of *Florence*, Lee says, 'our author has used the first half of his story to set up a primary center of interest in his heroine as a person of royal consequence. We see her act and speak with wit and forcefulness, so that when her persecution begins we never completely lose our sense of her as an active agent of God's will. The function of the lesser emphasis on legendary miraculous aspects of the second half is to bring the two halves more nearly together in a real world' (Lee, 'A Critical Edition' 160-61). Although I would doubt that the poet was so talented as to intentionally maintain a kind of coherence throughout the two halves, I also assume that he thought it appropriate to keep intact the warlike first part which he found in the French, as I shall argue later.

Before she marries Emere who has defended the Roman Empire against Garcy after her father's death, Florence is more of a forward and proud princess than a saintly heroine. When she hears that the hideous Emperor of Constantinople is wooing her, she does not conceal her abhorrence of him :

> And sche seyde, 'Jhesu forbede!'
> Sche seyde, 'Be God þat boght me dere,
> Me had leuyr þe warste bachylere,
> In all my fadurs thede,
> Then for to lye be hys bresyd boones,
> When he coghyth and oldely grones,
> I can not on hys lede.'
> (ll. 243-49 ; here and henceforth cited from
> Heffernan's edition)

Although at the sight of a number of war victims she meekly offers to marry Garcy (from which her father dissuades her), she still sounds a little saucy when she scorn-

fully chides Miles, Emere's brother, who is somewhat reluctant to marry her although her confidante, believing that Emere has been killed, tries to arrange the marriage :

> And [Mylys] seyde, 'Y schall avyse me.'
>
> 'Avyse þe,' seyde þat maydyn feyre,
> 'For to be my fadurs heyre?
> Lyghtly may ye thynke.
> Be hym þat suffurde woundys fyve,
> I schall neuyr be thy wyfe,
> To suffur dethys dynte.
> Kyngys and dewkys haue me askyd,
> And all þer londys wolde haue geue me <at þe laste>,
> And many a ryall thynke.'
> (ll. 909-18) (4)

When she finally marries Emere, Florence refuses to consummate their marriage until Garcy, whose army has killed her father, is captured. Carol Falvo Heffernan is puzzled by the heroine's rather excessive vindictiveness (140-41). Henry Lloyd Vandelinde emphasises that the heroine is spiritually misdirected in the first part of the poem, saying, 'Her quality of mercy is greatly strained, and her heart is full of vengeance, qualities which are understandable in a human context, but which are not fitting for the Christian perfection which she will eventually achieve. Thus, her trials must continue...' (227).

After a succession of hardships she undergoes in the homiletic second part of the romance, Florence, now a saintly nun, has gained healing power. Vandelinde maintains that '[h]er entrance into the nunnery is a complete acceptance of a life directed towards God, away from the secular matters which have concerned her until now' (230-31). He almost seems to suggest that Florence has to bear the consequences of, if not atone for, her earlier precocity and pride. Indeed, as Vandelinde argues, Florence is rather different from the eponymous heroine of *Emaré*, another Middle English tail-rhyme romance, who remains virtuous throughout, hence hardly representing a direct pattern of personal reformation (234-35) ; Florence, by contrast, clearly displays signs of spiritual growth towards the end of the poem. However, one surely cannot imagine that the late medieval romancer or his audiences could have looked upon the young Florence as a blameworthy heroine. If the poet had intended her to be looked upon as reproachable, he, like many other contemporary authors, would have more explicitly depicted her as such, as, for example, the otherwise pious hero of *Sir Isumbras* is described as sinning against

God at the beginning of the romance. [5]

3.

In Eton College, itself dedicated to the Madonna, is a magnificent Chapel of Our Lady of Pity. The mural paintings of the Chapel are believed to have been executed in 1479-80 by two painters, Gilbert and William Baker by name, and possibly another. Unfortunately the paintings were whitewashed by a college barber, paid 6s 8d for the obliteration, in 1560 as they were conceived to be 'popish' by iconoclasts. The paintings were uncovered in May 1847 (James & Tristram 4-5). I had a chance to see the wall paintings in August 1996 when I visited the College, but was not allowed to photograph them. However, black and white illustrations of the paintings can be found in James & Tristram. The style of the wall paintings in oils is continental rather than English, and not medieval in treatment (Caiger-Smith 71). The sources of the paintings, which depict the story of our falsely accused Empress, the figures of saints, and scenes from a variety of Marian legends, are believed to be chiefly two books readily accessible to the medieval clergy : *Speculum Historiale* of Vincent de Beauvais (d. 1244), and *Legenda Aurea* of Jacobus de Voragine (d. 1298) (James & Tristram 16).

The story of the calumniated Empress based on *Speculum Historiale* is seen in a series of pictures painted on the south wall (lower row) of the Chapel. A portion of the paintings was restored by E. W. Tristram. The series consists of eight scenes, each of which is divided roughly into two parts. The following are descriptions of the scenes which I have adapted from James and Tristram (24-26) — I. *left*: The Emperor, crowned and in armour, takes the hand of the kneeling Empress to say farewell. She, as throughout, wears her crown and a robe of ermine ; *right*: The Empress ushers her brother-in-law, who has obviously made advances to her, into the door of the tower in which he is confined ; II. *left*: the brother-in-law having just accused the Empress, the Emperor, with right arm raised and clenched fist, is about to smite the kneeling Empress ; *right*: The Empress, wiping her eyes with her handkerchief, is led off between two guards ; III. *left*: The two guards who have led her away are attacked ; *right*: The Empress is rescued by a knight ; IV. *left*: With a knife the knight's brother murders his nephew sleeping with the Empress who has become his nurse ; *right*: Banished by the knight, the Empress is led away by two men ; V. *left*: The Empress is seated with joined hands in the stern of a cockboat which a man propels with a long pole ; *right*: The Empress reclines on a rocky islet. Above her head on a small cloud is the crowned Virgin. At her feet grows the healing plant ; VI. *left*: two lepers are depicted ; *right*: The Empress holds out a small bowl, out of which the knight's diseased brother, kneeling, drinks. The knight lays his hand on his brother's head ; VII. *left*: Surrounded by the Pope, a cardinal and others, the Emperor's brother, kneeling, drinks from a glass bowl

held by the Empress (*right*). Beyond her stands the Emperor ; VIII. *left* : In the door of a building stands the abbess in white habit about to shake the hand of the Empress who kneels to her, in like habit ; *right* : A nun standing behind the Empress turns to speak to the Emperor. James and Tristram refer to the Constance story as found in Chaucer's 'The Man of Law's Tale', and John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* as an analogue of the accused Empress's story (23). However, the two stories have few motifs in common except that the heroine in either story is falsely accused by her rescuer's brother or servant,who,after murdering the victim — the wife in the Constance story — with a knife, puts the bloody weapon in the sleeping heroine's hand.

The Eton College Chapel paintings covering the calumniated Empress are set side by side with figures of well-known female saints. To the left of scene I referred to above is painted the figure of St Katherine. Between scenes I and II is St Barbara. In like manner the figures of St Apollonia, St Ursula, St Dorothy, St Lucy, St Juliana, and St Winifred are seen from left to right, although the one between scenes III and IV is yet to be identified, and the identification of St Lucy between scenes VI and VII is dubious (James and Tristram 36). Like the accused Empress, almost all of the female saints suffer terrible persecution at the hand of malefactors — powerful heathens in the saints' legends. There is even a tinge of sadomasochism in the stories of these holy women, contained in *Legenda Aurea* and others.

As in the story of the calumniated Empress, chastity is a virtue emphasised in the legends of Katherine, Apollonia, Dorothy, and Lucy. Like our Empress, Barbara is able to heal the disabled and the blind, and even resuscitate the dead. In the well-known story of 'The Eleven Thousand Virgins', Ursula marries into the heathen royal family of Anglia. The theme of undesirable marriage constitutes a part of *Florence*, although the wooing of Garcy is not related in the stories of the calumniated Empress, including Vincent's, other than *Florence*. (6) Later Ursula is martyred, scorning a barbarian army chief's proposal. Juliana refuses to marry her betrothed, the prefect of Nicomedia unless he accepts the faith of Christ. The angry prefect has her severely beaten, and orders her hung up by the hair of her head for half a day. Hanging up a lady by the hair is exactly what Florence's brother-in-law does to her, although his counterpart in *Speculum Historiale* does not. After Juliana is beheaded, the prefect and his men are drowned in the stormy sea. Winifred is yet another virgin martyr from Wales, who is later resuscitated and becomes a nun. Whilst I have pointed out a few instances where *Florence* and the legends of female saints, set against Vincent's story, share similar episodes, I do not intend to suggest that *Florence*, whether the French or the English, may have influenced the Eton College paintings in any way. But one may well note that the calumniated Empress in a variety of analogous stories never lacked her precursors, and how fitting it was for the painters to juxtapose them in the same row.

The rest of the Chapel walls are decorated with figures of other saints, both male

and female, and scenes from twenty-odd legends featuring Marian miracles. Amongst the miracles are, to name but a few, the famous story of Theophilus, where the contrite Theophilus, who has contracted himself to the Devil, prays to the Virgin, and is saved by her ; and that of the woman dying unconfessed, where the Virgin intercedes with her Son, the woman is revived, makes her confession of the one sin she has been ashamed to avow in life, is shriven, and dies again (James & Tristram 20, 33).

4.

Norwich Cathedral, founded in 1096, is unique amongst churches in England for its profusion of carved stone bosses. Of over one thousand roof bosses about seven hundred are historiated ; they either tell a story in themselves or are part of a story told in a sequence of bosses (Rose 363). The fourteenth-century Bauchun Chapel received its present vaulting adorned with forty-seven bosses around 1475 at the expense of William Sekyngton, an advocate in the Consistory Court held in the Chapel (James ii). (One of the Chapel bosses represents the half-length of a lawyer who may be identified with Sekyngton.) The work was apparently carried out during the episcopate of James Goldwell (1472-99), who had been consecrated bishop of Norwich in Rome where he had stayed for years. Martial Rose assumes that the Italianate romance of the falsely accused Empress could have been familiar to him (375). I visited the Chapel in March 1997, but the details of the vault bosses, albeit far lower than the Nave bosses, were hardly discernible to my myopic eyes. I was later provided with a set of colour slides of the bosses by the University of East Anglia, School of World Art Studies and Museology. Of the forty-seven bosses about thirty-two (the number varies from critic to critic) depict our story. These story-telling bosses are, however, set in no logical sequence, but scattered haphazardly throughout the two bays ; moreover, an apprentice's hand is apparent in much of the carving (Rose and Hedgecoe 94). The interpretation of each boss is therefore apt to be inescapably arbitrary. But one thing noticeable about the story-telling bosses is that like her counterpart in Eton the Empress wears a tiara throughout, making her identity clear to the viewers. (Hideka Fukui has suggested to me, however, that the tiara may serve the Empress as a kind of talisman, as an ornament does in some French versions of *Florence*.) The remainder of the bosses mostly represent the figures of the Virgin and angels. Two rather conspicuous bosses in the centre of each bay depict the Assumption and the Coronation respectively, a clear indication that the Chapel has been dedicated to the Virgin. Another boss, more precisely a sculptured corbel, is a Pietà . [7] Speculating about the viewers of these bosses, story-telling or otherwise, Rose and Hedgecoe remark, '[The Chapel] was an area largely reserved for the monks themselves, but used on occasion by pilgrims progressing round the ambulatory when visiting the cathedral's holy relics' (94). No one knows,

however, how many of these viewers were able to discern the story of the calumniated Empress.

The story of the Bauchun Chapel bosses seems to be by and large similar to that of the wall paintings in Eton College Chapel, except that the Emperor and Empress are reunited at the close of the story in Norwich whilst the Empress takes the veil in Eton. (8) Although some of the bosses are difficult to interpret properly, or allow two or more interpretations, scenes depicted in a dozen others are unmistakably peculiar to the story. Amongst those scenes are : the Empress is led away into the wood after she is falsely accused by her brother-in-law ; she serves as a nurse in the household of the knight who has rescued her ; (perhaps the most conspicuous boss of all) the murderer of the child (lying dead) slips a bloody knife into the hand of the sleeping Empress ; she is again banished and marooned on an island ; there she picks the herb the Virgin has shown her, putting it into a glove; and the Empress heals the sick by touching them. She appears to be holding a leaf of the herb.

Whilst James seems to consider that the stories told in the Eton College Chapel wall paintings and the Bauchun bosses are essentially identical, they are, as we have seen, slightly different from each other in some details. Unlike the wall paintings, in the execution of which the painters certainly referred to Vincent de Beauvais's *Speculum Historiale*, the source (s) of the sculptured bosses have yet to be identified. Discussing the bosses of the Cathedral in general, M. Q. Smith argues that the bosses may reflect the performance of the Norwich cycle of mystery plays, in part on the ground that the monastery staff would have an intimate contact with players and producers of the cycle, members of a guild in the city (15). M. D. Anderson, who focuses on this particular series of bosses in the Bauchun Chapel, maintains that basing the bosses upon a play was 'evidently a normal practice among the Norwich carvers,' adding, 'it is hard to imagine how else they obtained such a variety of designs' (188). In her study of the relations between the N-Town plays, formerly known as *Ludus Coventriae*, and the bosses in the Nave of the Cathedral, Helen Sylvia Sherman is reluctant to see any positive interaction between the two genres, though she does not explicitly deny one's influence on the other (197-98). Frances K. Barasch, in her recent insightful essay, deems it necessary to take into account several different traditions of the Empress legend in identifying the sources of the boss story (72-73). She takes note of two particular bosses : one which has been believed by some critics to be an illustration of the Empress governing as regent in her husband's absence, but which she thinks depicts the scene where the Emperor and Empress ride home after their happy reunion ; and the other stone long held to be a representation of the Empress healing her leprous brother-in-law, which, she believes, shows the sick and dying Empress. Drawing on the two bosses, she singles out two possible sources : the *Gesta Romanorum* which, unlike Vincent's version, ends with the couple's return home, and a popular redaction of the legend by

Gautier de Coinci who describes the Empress on her deathbed in a representation of the theme of *memento mori* (69-72). [9] No critic has, as far as I know, ever linked the romance of *Florence* with the vault bosses in the Bauchun Chapel, let alone the mural paintings in Eton College. With its militaristic introductory part, which is not depicted in the bosses and would have been utterly unfitting for the devotional purposes of the Chapel of Our Lady of Pity, the romance has been naturally overlooked as a possible source of the bosses. No reliable evidence, actually, favours a relationship between the two. I hope, however, it will turn out in the following sections that *Le Bone Florence of Rome* is hardly ever more distant from the story in the carved bosses in its devotional mindset than are analogous stories, including the *Gesta* and some Marian miracles.

5.

In an attempt to compare our romance with its analogues, I have chosen, along with the versions told in the wall paintings and the bosses, the *Gesta Romanorum* (the Latin version composed in the late thirteenth century ; the Middle English version in the early fifteenth century), a short version of the Middle English miracle (the end of the thirteenth century, but in a mid-fifteenth-century manuscript), and Christine de Pizan's short reworking titled 'Florence de Rome' in *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1404-05), which is considered to be close to the miracle-type. Thomas Hoccleve adapted an Anglo-Latin version of the *Gesta* for a nearly one thousand-line English poem in 1421. I have found Hoccleve's reworking, albeit with occasional sympathetic comments he added, essentially similar to the *Gesta*, whether the Latin or the English. For the purpose of the present discussion, therefore, I shall treat the two versions of the *Gesta* and Hoccleve's as one under the title *Gesta Romanorum*. I shall also refer to *Florence de Rome*, a relatively early and lengthy French version (the end of the thirteenth century or beginning of the fourteenth century). The story of the Eton wall paintings based on Vincent's *Historiale* belongs to the Virgin miracle-type, and so, it seems, does the story of the Norwich bosses. It is to be noted that all the works we are examining were, with the exception of the Latin *Gesta*, composed in the late Middle Ages or are contained in manuscripts of the time. [10]

Laura A. Hibbard lists the 'nine principal incidents' generally shared by different versions of the the legend of the falsely accused Empress : (1) the wooing of the heroine by her brother-in-law ; (2) the accusation of adultery brought against her by him ; (3) her condemnation to death or exile ; (4) her flight ; (5) her refuge in a household where she is again wooed by a rejected suitor who in revenge murders the child of her protectors and accuses her of the crime ; (6) her second flight ; (7) her adventure with a debtor whom she frees from debt but who sells her to a ship's captain ; (8) her escape from the captain through a storm that wrecks the boat or causes the captain to put her ashore ; (9) her life as a holy woman whose fame as a

healer brings to her ultimately all her stricken persecutors ; her restoration when by their confession her innocence is finally established (17-18). As I consider her itemisation to be basically valid, I propose to examine the analogues roughly following the sequence of this list.

As we have already seen, *Florence,* whether the English or the French, contains a lengthy description of the war between Rome and Constantinople, which is absent from any of its analogues. Though it may give an impression of burlesque to the modern reader, as Mehl suggests, I would think that the spectacular military scene may have been much favoured by the medieval audiences. I have elsewhere discussed predilection for fighting scenes in some Middle English romances, notably ones in tail-rhyme stanza ('Middle English"Breton Lays''' 271-72). The author of the Middle English *Florence* had, I imagine, every reason to keep intact what he had found in his French exemplar.

Turning to Hibbard's first motif, one finds the brother-in-law's wooing of the heroine in the absence of the Emperor, which is followed by the imprisonment of the brother by the Empress, is shared by all the tales under discussion. (11) Immediately before the Emperor's return, his brother succeeds in persuading the Empress to release him. (In *Florence*, the Empress spontaneously frees her brother-in-law out of compassion.) In *Florence*, the Middle English miracle, Christine de Pizan, the Eton wall paintings, and the Bauchun bosses, the brother falsely accuses the Empress of adultery or some other forms of evildoing after the Emperor has returned (Hibbard's second motif). The *Gesta Romanorum* does not relate the accusation, but has the Empress kidnapped and again wooed by her brother-in-law before the Emperor's homecoming.

In the versions other than the *Gesta*, the style of accusation varies. The offender says, 'The Emperesse wolde witterly/ Have hade hym lye hir bye' in the miracle (ll. 11-12), whilst in Christine's adaptation he accuses 'the lady of every possible evil, as though she were the most immoral woman ever, and he claimed she had held him in prison in order to carry out her own evil will rather than to follow the emperor's command' (177). What is at stake in the latter seems to be the heroine's respectability in general as the Empress Regent. Though there is no knowing how the Empress is rebuked in the wall paintings and the bosses, she is blamed for adultery and treachery in Vincent's *Speculum*, the source of the paintings. The Emperor believes what his brother says, and banishes his wife in the miracle-type represented by these. In the English *Florence*, the brother-in-law Miles says :

'Syr, thus thy wyfe hath dyght me,

For Y seyde Y schulde hur bewrye,
When Y fonde Egravayne lygyng hur by,

In preson put sche me forthy,
And sorowe hath made me to drye.'
(ll. 1301-05)

Egravayne is a good knight of the Emperor. The Emperor is deeply saddened by the accusation, but Egravayne reveals the truth to his lord, who banishes his brother. Later development is similar to that of the *Gesta.* This attempted accusation seems to indicate that our romance, containing the elements of both the *Gesta*-type and the miracle-type, is situated halfway between the two types. (Which influenced which is beyond the scope of the present essay.)

Hibbard's third motif, the heroine's condemnation to death or exile, is naturally absent from *Florence* and the *Gesta*, but present in the miracle, Christine's *Book*, the wall paintings, and the bosses. The Empress's flight, the fourth motif, is told in all the stories, but involves her brother-in-law's persistent wooing and torture in the wood in *Florence* and the *Gesta.* Though she has managed to preserve her honour with the aid of God and the Virgin, the Empress, like St Juliana, is hung by the hair by the brother-in-law, who abandons her. In the French version of *Florence*, her chastity is in part protected by wild animals which attack Miles, and a magical brooch (Lee, 'A Critical Edition' 96-98, 299-300).

Here follows Hibbard's fifth motif, which is shared by all of the analogues, and not unlike the episode in Chaucer's 'The Man of Law's Tale' and Gower's *Confessio Amantis.* She is rescued by a knight (Sir Tyrry by name in *Florence*), who makes her his child's nurse. But the knight's servant or seneschal in *Florence*, the *Gesta* and the Middle English miracle of the Virgin, or his brother in Christine de Pizan and *Speculum,* as in the Crescentia story, becomes amorous of her, is rejected, and contrives to ensnare her. He slits the throat of the knight's child (daughter in *Florence* and the *Gesta*, and probably son in the others), and slips the knife into the hands of the sleeping Empress. She is accused of the murder. The style of the accusation varies slightly from story to story, but the variation does not seem to be worth considering in detail for our purpose. But it is interesting to note that only in *Florence* is the heroine rather aggressive in defending her chastity against Machary, the lovesick servant knight :

Before hur bedd lay a stone,
The lady toke hyt vp anon,
And toke hyt in a gethe,
On þe mowþe sche hym hyt,
That hys fortethe owte he spytt,
Above and also benethe.
Hys mowthe, hys nose, braste owt on blood,

Forthe at þe chaumbur dore he ȝode,
For drede of more wrethe ;
(ll. 1603-11)

In the next stanza, he lies to his lord when he says he has had his teeth smashed in a tournament. Brave actions of heroines in almost male fashion such as this are not necessarily rare in Old and Middle English literature (Lee, 'A Critical Edition' 156-57). I have also argued elsewhere that the authors of tail-rhyme romances often favour resourceful and firmly determined ladies (Tajiri, 'A Study' 157), though this particular scene is not the Middle English poet's original.

She is condemned to death by the lord, but her punishment is mitigated to banishment at the eleventh hour. Her second flight (Hibbard's sixth motif) starts. Though this episode is shared by all the stories dealt with here, details vary considerably. In *Florence* and the *Gesta*, and probably in Christine's *Book*, too, the Empress rides alone in exile, whilst she is banished in a boat, and marooned on an islet in the miracle, the Eton paintings, and the Bauchun bosses. The latter group seems to represent a pattern common in the miracle-type.

Hibbard's seventh and eighth motifs are not seen in the miracle-type including Christine de Pizan. The Empress in *Florence* and the *Gesta* then saves a thief about to be hanged, and makes him her page. In *Florence,* she wishes to sail to Jerusalem. [12] He and a burgess sell her to a mariner, who makes advances to her. Her chastity is again defended by God or the Virgin. The mariner's ship sinks in the stormy sea, but she is saved and reaches a nunnery. If *Florence* and the *Gesta* are, as some critics argue, conflated versions of the earlier miracle-type, the heroine's navigation may be a vestige of her banishment to sea by the knight, as found in the miracle-type.

All the versions under consideration have the Empress play the role of a healer in the dénouement of the story, and she cures even her now ailing persecutors after they have confessed their evildoing, which leads to reunion with her husband (Hibbard's ninth and last motif). [13] What distinguishes the *Florence/Gesta*-type and the miracle-type, including the wall paintings and the bosses, is the way she gains her healing power. All we are told in *Florence*, for example, is that she is able to cure her sick fellow sister in the nunnery, and that her fame as a healer spreads across countries. There is no mention of herbs. In the Latin (but not English) *Gesta,* she is described as learned in herbs, but no Marian miracle is involved in her becoming a healer in any versions of the *Gesta.* The Empress in the miracle-type is invariably instructed in the use of herbs by the Virgin in visions. [14] The Virgin says in the Middle English miracle, '"Emperesse,... care thee noght : / This herbe thou schalt have. / Al lepre thou schalt save/ That knowlechen in open confessioun/ Alle the synnes that thai han done"' (ll. 74-78). Her visions of the Virgin and her picking herbs are also explicitly depicted in the wall paintings and the bosses, as we have

earlier seen. Whilst Florence in our romance heals the sick solely by touching them, the Empress in the other versions seems to resort to both herbs and touching. Her fame as a healer now attracts her disease-stricken former persecutors to the nunnery: in the case of *Florence*, the leprous Miles, the paralytic Machary, the disabled mariner, and the footless Clarebald, the thief who has betrayed the Empress. All of them are ignorant of her identity. (In the Middle English miracle of the Virgin, Christine's *Book*, and *Speculum Historiale*, she does the healing after she returns to her native Rome.) A feature unique to *Florence* is that Emperor Emere, Florence's husband, also suffers terrible pain from an injury he has received to his head in a battle, and comes to the nunnery. He identifies his wife, but remains silent. In the other versions, he simply accompanies his brother, not knowing the latter's malefaction. This is probably because otherwise the Emperor in *Florence*, who has already learnt of his brother's treachery and banished him,would have no reason whatever to come all the way to the nunnery.

Another episode found only in *Florence* is that the four evil men, after being shriven and cured by Florence, are burnt all together at the stake by the ireful Emperor, who has also been healed by her: 'He made to make a grete fyre, / And caste þem yn wyth all þer tyre, / Then was the lady woo' (ll. 2119-21). In at least one of the French versions, the evil men are also punished—a possible source of the English. It is worth noting that Christine de Pizan in her redaction of the miracle has the Emperor attempt to execute his brother, but Florence pacifies him. Marijane Osborn remarks that the existence of such a scene aligns Christine's version with the French and English romances rather than with the traditional miracle-type (251). Lee, commenting on the scene in *Florence*, says, 'If [the execution] causes anyone a brief pang of distress, it must be said that Florence's career as a lone fighter against evil cannot continue indefinitely. In the world of the romance, she needs the protection of a powerful husband and must therefore assume her proper subservient role as wife to an emperor' ('A Critical Edition' 133). Vandelinde takes note of the combination of forgiveness and retribution in hagiographical romances like ours, adding that '[s]he gets the benefit of vengeance without responsibility and the luxury of pity without complicity' (233). I have pointed out in my essay on the Middle English Breton lays in tail-rhyme stanza that the theme of retribution seems to have been much favoured by the tail-rhyme romancers, though this particular instance of retribution in our romance seems to have been borrowed (but perhaps not uncritically) from a French version ('A Study' 149). [15]

As we have seen, the Empress finally takes the veil after healing the criminals in the Eton College wall paintings. In all of the other versions including even the Middle English miracle and Christine's *Book*, the couple are reconciled. In *Florence,* she has been in a nunnery before their reunion, but she returns to secular life, an ending the medieval audiences of romance would have certainly expected as a natural course

of events. The heroine's secularisation in the *Gesta Romanorum* is utilised for the author's purpose in the concluding *moralitas,* as we shall see immediately. What is perhaps the most intriguing is that some later versions of the miracle-type, of which the original form must have concluded with the Empress's permanent farewell to secular life rather than reconciliation, do reunite the couple. Here is, it seems, an instance of intermingling of the miracle-type and the generally more secular *Florence/ Gesta*-type.

A conspicuous feature of the *Gesta Romanorum*, whether the Latin or the English or Hoccleve's adaptation, is its *moralitas*, which may strike the modern reader as somewhat redundant and even farfetched. This form of preaching accompanies all of the *Gesta* stories the author intends as allegories. After our story of the calumniated Empress, the author writes, 'Imperator est dominus noster ihsus cristus, Imperatrix est anima, que tradita est fratri ejus, i.e. homini, in custodiam...' (Oesterley 653), which is why the Emperor and Empress must be reconciled. None of the other versions conclude with a *moralitas.* We have seen that *Florence* and the *Gesta Romanorum* are in a rather close affiliation, as set against the other versions, especially in the light of the existence in both of Hibbard's seventh and eighth motifs. There is, however, one noticeable difference between the two ; the Virgin Mary, along with God, is often invoked when the Empress's chastity is in danger in the latter half of *Florence*, and the Virgin lends her succour, whilst in the *Gesta* the heroine usually resorts solely to God's help on such occasions. When she was attacked by her brother-in-law in the wood in *Florence*, she 'preyed God to be hur schylde,' and Miles's 'lykyng vanyscht all awaye, / Thorow þe myght of Mary mylde' (ll. 1497, 1499-1500). Here God and his mother are in collaboration to save the Empress. As we have seen, wild animals and a magical brooch are also operative in the French *Florence*, but the direct intervention of the Virgin is brought into focus in the English. When the mariner attempts to rape her later in the romance, she prays again :

Sche seyde, 'Lady Mary free,
Now thou haue mercy on me,
  Thou faylyst me neuyr at nede.
Here my errande as þou well may,
That Y take no schame today,
  Nor lose my maydynhede.'
Then beganne þe storme to ryse,
And that vpon a dolefull wyse,
  The marynere rose and yede.
  . . . . . .
Then þe schypp clave insondur,

All þat was yn hyt soone went vndur,
And drowned boþe man and swayne.
(ll. 1852-60, 1870-72)

Only the Empress and the mariner were washed ashore alive on separate beaches. The Virgin's miracle here is particularly fitting for her, because she was worshipped by medieval seafarers as *Stella Maris* who grants safe voyage. The Empress then enters the nunnery in praise of God and 'Hys modur, Mary bryght, / That safe and sownde broght hur ryght/ Vnto the roche of stone' (ll. 1915-17). Heffernan asserts that Mary's miraculous interventions 'underscore the ties that *Florence* has to Tales of the Virgin' (144-45). (16) In marked contrast to *Florence*, the Virgin is invoked in none of the three versions of the *Gesta*. In the contexts corresponding to the two scenes we have seen above, Hoccleve, for example, has her pray to Jesus. When she is assaulted by the mariner, she says, '"O god, our Lord, Ihesu, our Saueour, / þat fro my youthe haast kept me to this day, / Curteys Ihesu me keepe now this hour/ ffrom al pollucioun..."' (ll. 659-62). Then follows the storm.

As we have seen earlier, the Virgin tells the Empress to pick herbs in visions in the miracle-type stories, whilst she does not in *Florence*. Lee points out that the Virgin's intervention in the romance is not always as straightforward or conspicuous as it may seem, saying, 'although it seems to be the Virgin Mary's special concern to guard Florence's purity, when her life is in jeopardy, she must depend on human aid : it is Tyrry who rescues her from Mylys' murderous assault and then reprieves her from the sentence of burning' ('A Critical Edition' 130-31). It is to be remembered, however, that only in *Florence* is the Virgin described as intervening twice at the very moment when the heroine's chastity is jeopardised. I do not think her role as the guardian of the Empress is any less significant than in the miracle-type. (17) In fact, perhaps reflecting the widespread Marian cult of the time, tail-rhyme romances record frequent references to, or invocations of, Mary (Tajiri, 'A Study' 157-58).

Florence, who has earlier refused to allow her husband into her bed until he has captured Garcy, keeps her virginity until the end of the romance. This setting is unique to *Florence*. In the other analogues, the Emperor and Empress hardly seem to be virgins, and in fact, she has a child in the Middle English miracle. Vandelinde notes, 'The spiritual benefits of virginity are also the central aspects of a series of events carefully related to connect Florence and the Virgin Mary,' though '[t]he poem does not... transform her into the Virgin' (222). Florence is also likened to the lily, which traditionally symbolises the Virgin, three times (ll. 901, 1024, 1538) in the romance, though this figuration applied to a noble lady is in no way limited to our heroine alone, but omnipresent in medieval romances. It is well known that the medieval Church regarded virginity as a cardinal virtue expected of young wom-

en. Virginity was created by God, and so St Ambrose thought that for a woman to lose her maidenhead was to deface the work of the Creator ; according to St Augustine, the marriage of Joseph and Mary, who experienced no sexual intercourse, was the ideal, and continence was the best expression of love between man and wife (Warner 73, 77). The young Florence's somewhat insolent request to her husband has, albeit unintentionally, left her virginal throughout the romance, thereby making her in part reminiscent of the Virgin herself [18]

6.

We may well now summarise what has emerged from the foregoing comparison of the analogues. Indeed there are some discrepancies between *Florence* and the miracle-type represented by the Middle English miracle of the Virgin, Christine de Pizan, the Eton wall paintings, and the Bauchun bosses, whilst the romance occasionally demonstrates a close affinity to the story of the *Gesta Romanorum*. However, *Florence* never stresses the allegorical significance of the story as the *Gesta* does, but, like the miracle-type, brings into focus the intervention of the Virgin. Though Mary does not instruct the Empress to pick herbs as in the miracle-type, she does help her to preserve her honour. Also it is to be remembered that in our romance there are several motifs — i. e., a fondness for battle scenes, a determined and resourceful lady, retribution against evil, and veneration for the Virgin — which seem to have been favoured by romance authors (in particular of tail-rhyme romances) and their enterprising middle-class audiences in late medieval England. The romance is, if second-rate in its literary merit, an attractive, entertaining and moderately didactic piece derived from some different literary traditions.

We have found nothing suggestive of interaction between our romance, and the wall paintings and the sculptured bosses. Nevertheless, *Florence*, as set against the *Gesta Romanorum* for example, is not a far cry from the iconographic arts in that both were intended to enhance the Marian devotion. In fact, of the English works telling the story of the falsely accused Empress, the romance may be, if not directly linked, the closest at least to the bosses. Barasch singles out the *Gesta* as a possible source of the Norwich bosses, as we have earlier seen. My argument never excludes this possibility. But if she is correct, *Florence* may be said to be related to the bosses in a double sense: via the eventful but happy-ending *Gesta*-type with which the romance is apparently aligned, and via the structurally simpler and pious miracle-type it also shows some affinity with. And setting aside the matter of interrelationship between the written stories and the painted or carved ones, one still finds it intriguing that these were produced roughly in the same period in medieval England.

The Cambridge manuscript which contains Florence is, like some other English manuscripts of the time, a composite collection of devotional lyrics, saints' lives,

and entertaining but religiously instructive romances, roughly in order of appearance. The former part contains, amongst other things, *A salutacion of oure lady, The lyfe of seynte margaret,* a piece on the Assumption of the Virgin, *þe lyfe of seynt kateryn,* and a lamentation of the Virgin. The romance section of the collection includes, besides *Florence*, *The Erle of Tolous*, *Syr Egyllamore of Artas, Syr Tryamowre,* and *Octavian,* all of which tell the stories of falsely accused queens and/or wandering princes. They also almost invariably invoke Mary at crucial stages. (For the contents of this manuscript and others, see Guddat-Figge 95-97.) McSparran and Robinson believe that the collection was intended for pious middle-class lay citizens (vii, x-xii). The manuscript context seems to clearly show how the items in this collection, including, of course, our romance, echo each other in their literary message of which the Marian devotion is an integral part. The romance and other items, notably the devotional pieces in the former part, seem to share some details, too. McSparran and Robinson argue that some meditative and penitential items in prose and verse in this manuscript reflect the obligation of annual confession which the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) imposed on the faithful (viii). Confession is also a dominant theme in the dénouement of *Florence.* Item 28, *A good ensaumple of a lady þat was in dyspeyre,* the story of a miracle which revives the faith of a lady who has doubted the presence of Christ in the Sacrament at Mass, is based on the doctrine of transubstantiation (defined by the Council and by subsequent councils in 1274 and 1439) (McSparran & Robinson x). Transubstantiation is mentioned twice in the heroine's speeches in *Florence*: "'Be hym Y sawe in forme of bredd, / When þe preest can synge'" (ll. 1004-05); "'Y wyll weddyd bee/ To a lorde that neuyr schall dye, / That preestys schewe in forme of bredd'" (ll. 1099-1101).[19] Critics nowadays think much of the manuscript context in studying a particular work contained in a medieval manuscript. Perhaps CUL MS Ff. 2.38 should also be read as a kind of unity, where *Florence* is surrounded by a variety of Marian and (female) saints' legends featuring hapless ladies under the protection of the Virgin. Like any other manuscript of this kind, it may be likened to a contemporary church or chapel as a whole, where similar stories are narrated by means of visual arts.

Piero della Francesca's painting, the polyptych of the *Madonna della Misericordia* (Our Lady of Mercy) (1445-48) depicts the Virgin as spreading her star-spangled cloak over men and women huddled on their knees at her feet. She, so to speak, shelters her flock (Warner 326). The image of the Virgin as represented in this painting inspired veneration for her. Also pseudo-Bonaventure refers to the Madonna sheltering her flock in one of his prayers. The image, which omitted Christ altogether, though technically heterodox, 'travelled throughout Europe during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and enjoyed an unprecedentedly wide circulation' (Warner 327-28).[20] The calumniated Empress in the Cambridge manuscript, Eton College Chapel and the Bauchun Chapel, flanked by her companions in ill

fortune, may be said to be Mary's daughter under her maternal protection.

7.

McSparran and Robinson report that the manuscript came into the possession of Bishop John Moore (1646-1714) during his episcopate in Norwich (1691-1707). He was an enthusiastic collector of books and manuscripts (xvii). Humphrey Prideaux, dean of Norwich (1702-24), however, castigated the bishop as "'a close designing man" who would " fain grasp everything for his brood", sacrificing the diocese to his own secular interest' (Atherton & Morgan 568). There is no knowing whether Moore had noticed similarities between the romance and the story carved in the Bauchun bosses. One could even doubt if he read the romance, or identified the story in stone at all. If he had noticed the similarities, I would be only too happy that I am not necessarily alone in the foregoing comparison of the romance and the story-telling bosses. If he did not, which is more likely, it is just that the manuscript of the romance and the bosses were both in the city for a period of time in the seventeenth century, until Moore's library was purchased by George I after his death and presented by the King to the University Library in 1715 (McSparran & Robinson xvii). However this may have been, Middle English romances, metrical ones at least,had ceased to be popular long before that,and many medieval icons in England, including the Eton wall paintings, had been destroyed by iconoclasts, whilst the Roman Catholic Church had formally proclaimed the heterodoxy of the Madonna of Mercy at the Council of Trent (1545-63) (Warner 328). (21)

Notes

* An abridged version of this paper was presented at the Fifth International Medieval Congress, Leeds, England, July 1998. Its revised Japanese version was read at The Fourteenth Congress of the Japan Society for Medieval English Studies, Yamaguchi Prefectural University, Japan, December 1998. I appreciate valuable questions and suggestions from the floor. I am particularly grateful to Professor Hideka Fukui of Otemae Women's College, who chaired the session in Yamaguchi and gave me useful information respecting some French versions of the romance. I am indebted to the University of East Anglia, School of World Art Studies and Museology for making available to me a set of colour slides of the Bauchun Chapel bosses in Norwich Cathedral. I would also like to thank Professor Ian C. Stirk, my colleague, who as always improved my style.

(1) *Liber de Excellentia*, cited in Gibson 138.

(2) For the synopsis of the romance, see Severs 131.

(3) For relations amongst the analogues, see, amongst relatively recent studies, Hibbard 12-21 ; Lee, 'A Critical Edition' 28-54 ; and Heffernan 3-17 in order of publication. They draw particularly on Wallensköld.

(4) In the light of his later persistent advances to Florence, Miles's hesitation to marry her at this stage is difficult to appreciate. Vandelinde suggests that '[i]t may just be evidence of a badly wrought poem' (220).

(5) In a French version titled *Dit de Florence de Romme*, Florence, who takes a vow of chastity at the beginning of the story, commits perjury by agreeing to marry Emere. Here her persecution follows as a divine punishment (Lee, 'A Critical Edition' 271).

(6) Perryman notes a possible relation between *The King of Tars* and the Ursula legend (51-52). This being the case,

and given the possibility that the *Tars* poet may have drawn on a version of our romance, the relation between the legend and *Florence* may also be worth considering, though Garcy is not a heathen Emperor. Like Florence's father, Ursula's father is sorely troubled by the Anglian king's proposal.

(7) The cult of Our Lady was particularly prominent in East Anglia, where, for example, the holy shrine at Little Walsingham, Norfolk, was one of the most important pilgrimage sites in England. See Gibson 139-77.

(8) For the summary of the Bauchun version of the story, see James 1-2, 6-7 and Anderson 189.

(9) Barasch is not the first to take note of the *Gesta Romanorum*. James refers to the work, though the purpose of his study is not to identify the source(s) from which the sculptors worked.

(10) For the texts of the analogues, I have turned respectively to Oesterley's edition of the Latin *Gesta*, Ito's Japanese translation of the Latin, Herrtage's edition of the Middle English *Gesta*, Furnivall's edition of Hoccleve, Boyd's edition of the Middle English miracle of the Virgin, Richards's English translation of Christine, Wallensköld's edition of the French *Florence*. *Speculum Historiale* is found in Volume 4 of Vincentius Bellovacensis's *Speculum Quadruplex sive Speculum Maius*. James and Tristram's summary of it (23-24) is useful.

(11) Unlike written texts, it is not always easy to identify particular scenes in the wall paintings and, particularly, the bosses. In their interpretations of the Bauchun bosses, for example, Anderson does not find the brother-in-law's imprisonment in the tower by the heroine whilst Barasch does (Anderson 190 ; Barasch 66-67).

(12) Vandelinde maintains that 'Florence... still regards herself as somewhat socially relevant' when she frees the thief to be her servant, saying, 'Wolde þou serue me wele, / I schulde the quyte euery dele' (ll. 1732-33), an offer of secular worth (229). I would think, however, that it is simply indicative of her innate goodness and naiveté. Lee, on the other hand, wonders why Florence wants to go to Jerusalem to seek news of her husband's homecoming. She suggests that the place-name may be mentioned 'as a vestige of the original tradition which has the husband make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land at the beginning of the story' ('A Critical Edition' 306-07).

(13) In the French version of *Florence*, much longer than the English, the heroine offers up a lengthy prayer 'which takes the whole Bible as its province, ranging from Adam and Abraham to Judas', which has been radically curtailed in the English romance without any mention of the Bible episodes (Lee, 'A Critical Edition' 106-07).

(14) In the early Crescentia story, the heroine is instructed not by the Virgin but by St Peter.

(15) It is beyond explanation why the burgess, Clarebald's accomplice in selling Florence to the mariner, is never mentioned, let alone punished in the concluding part. Is the treatment out of consideration for the benevolence of his wife who has accorded her a hospitable reception? It is more likely, however, that the burgess has slipped out of the poet's mind by this stage of the romance.

(16) In contexts where the heroine's virginity is not at stake, she does not pray to Mary even in the latter half of the romance. For instance, 'Sche preyed to God þat boght hur dere/ To sende hur sownde to Syr Emere, / That hur full dere had boght' (1573-75). In the light of this, it is hard to understand why Florence does not invoke Mary when Machary attempts to violate her in the household of the knight who has rescued her. The author may have thought it more hilarious to have her smash his teeth on her own, or thought the Virgin's help of the heroine should be silently understood, or may have simply forgotten to refer to her.

(17) In the Middle English miracle, the Virgin prevents the Empress from being drowned after she has been set adrift by the lord who suspected her of murdering his child.

(18) Lee notes that Florence tries to make use of any weapon, including her chastity, to capture Garcy in revenge for the murder of her father ('A Critical Edition' 136) ; Vandelinde goes so far as to say that 'Florence... sees her sexuality as a commodity' (224). Osborn, on the other hand, sees a vestige of the ancient goddess, the Christian transformation of whom is often claimed to be the Virgin, in the resourcefulness and independent spirit of Florence and other romance heroines. See also Tajiri, 'A Study' 161.

(19) In her note to the reference to transubstantiation, Lee reports that there is no counterpart in the French romance, adding, 'our poet is familiar with the most common teachings of church doctrine.' Whilst she suggests that the lines may be more like a formula than a doctrinal reference, she quotes E. Kö lbing as commenting that references to transubstantiation are rare in Middle English and French romance ('A Critical Edition' 292).

(20) To Piero's polyptych, however, a smaller panel depicting the Crucifixion is attached. See Bertelli 26.

(21) The bosses in the Bauchun Chapel, along with the other ones in Norwich Cathedral, seem to have survived iconoclasm because of the sheer difficulty of destroying carvings at such a height.

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